



**Australia for UNHCR**

## **Increasing access to primary school education for 2000 refugee children**

**The construction of new primary school facilities in Mai-Aini Camp, Tigray Region, Ethiopia**

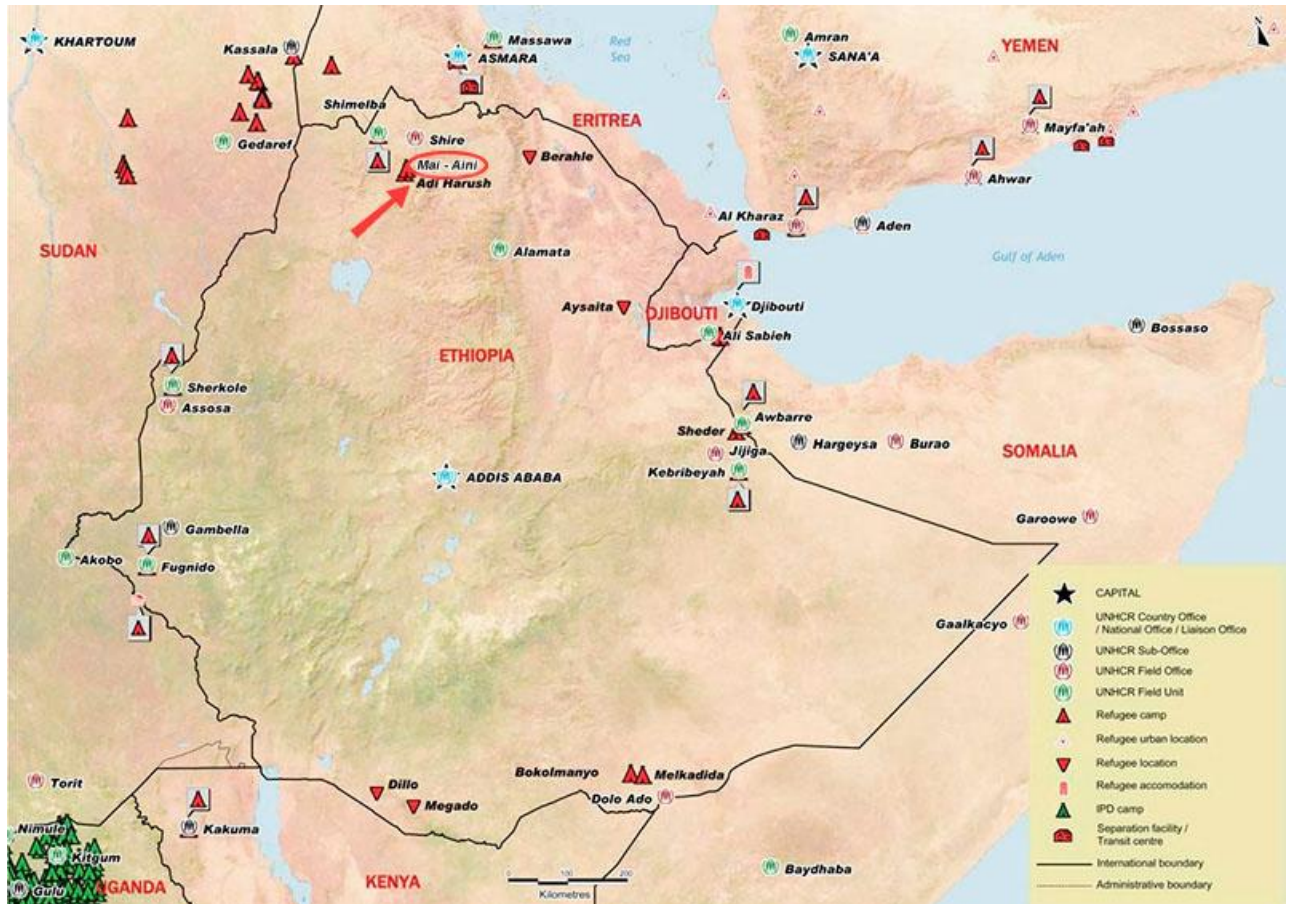


Mai-Aini Refugee camp, Ethiopia, March 2011, *UNHCR*

**Location:** Mai-Aini camp, Tigray Region, Ethiopia

**Direct Beneficiaries:** over 2000 Eritrean refugee children of primary school age

**Objective:** to increase children's access to quality education in Mai-Aini refugee camp by constructing additional classrooms and other basic school facilities



## Background

- **UNHCR's commitment to a primary school education for every refugee child**

Every child, youth and adult of concern to UNHCR has the right to education. UNHCR, with its obligation to provide international protection and find durable solutions for refugees and other people of concern under its mandate, faces the challenge to ensure the fundamental right to education. Without an education, children, including adolescents, are less likely to be healthy, grow strong, be safe or fully participate in their communities. Without an education, communities are less likely to achieve their other development goals.

The long-term vision of UNHCR is to ensure the right to education for all people of concern to UNHCR by achieving universal primary education and creating increased opportunities for post-primary education (secondary, vocational training, non-formal and adult education) with special focus on girls, urban and protracted situations.

- **The situation of Eritrean refugees**

Eritrean refugees began seeking asylum in Ethiopia in May 2000, following the border conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. There are now over 48,000 Eritrean refugees recognized by the government and UNHCR living in Ethiopia almost a third of whom are children under the age of 17.

The refugees reside in five different camps located in the Northern and North-eastern parts of Ethiopia. The profile of the Eritrean refugee population in Mai-Aini, Shimelba and Adi Harush is very particular - most of the refugees are young single males fleeing persecution.

Between 800 and 1,000 more arrive in UNHCR's camps every month. Among them are significant numbers of unaccompanied children. Some are as young as six years old, and are being taken care of by the oldest child in the group. Having left Eritrea they cannot return.

### **Mai-Aini refugee camp**

Mai-Aini refugee camp was established in May 2008 to host Eritrean refugees primarily of the Tigrinya tribe and its population reached 13,000 in April this year. A distinguishing feature of the refugee population in the camp is the rapidly growing number of unaccompanied and separated minors. In this camp 56 % of students attending primary school are unaccompanied children, with an average of 40 children per month arriving from Eritrea. Earlier this year, their total number had reached more than 1,300. The camp's primary school now urgently needs physical improvement and expansions.

- **Existing primary school facilities**

In 2009 UNHCR constructed 8 classrooms to accommodate over 100 students enrolled at the time. However the number of students attending primary school (grades 1-8) has significantly increased and at the beginning of the 2010/2011 academic year was around 1450 students. As the existing classrooms could not accommodate the higher number of enrolled primary school students, five temporary shades (see photo) made of available resources such as bamboo and tattered fabric were constructed in an effort to accommodate all enrolments.



But the number of children attending primary education classes has continued to increase and existing classrooms, both permanent and temporary, have become overcrowded with student-to-classroom ratios reaching as high as 77:1.

- **Implications of poor facilities on students**

The existing primary school does not have a library, administration block, or teaching resource center, all of which aid the provision of quality education and school management. In addition, shade structures are not suitable for effective implementation of participatory learning methodologies.

These factors have had a negative impact on the retention of school-aged children at the camp's school. In the last semester of 2011 the primary school program experienced a 17.9% dropout rate. The inadequate facilities and the resulting poor educational outcomes are of great concern to teachers, parents and students alike. However the biggest threat is to unaccompanied children who, frustrated by the difficulties of camp life and the limited opportunities for education, are leaving the camp and moving on to third countries such as Sudan and Egypt en route to Europe or the Middle East, exposing themselves to harsh conditions, land mines and child exploitation.

The Assistant High Commissioner Erika Feller who visited the camp in July 2011, commented that "these are young people with a future who can't see their future".

### **Project requirements and outcomes**

- Three new primary school blocks with four classrooms each (a total of 12 classrooms)
- Two blocks of sex-segregated latrines with eight toilets each
- One school feeding facility
- One multi-purpose block with space for a library, teachers' centre, administration office, and staff room
- Connection of the above-mentioned facilities to the water supply system in the camp
- Leveling of the grounds around the primary school blocks for recreational purposes.
- Enrolment and attendance of **all** primary school children in Mai-Aini, expected to benefit over 2000 children

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Constant project monitoring is guaranteed by the UNHCR presence in the field, including the local office in Shire and the country office in Addis Ababa. UNHCR staff members make any necessary changes swiftly, should framework and project conditions change, and monitor the timeframe and planning schedule of the projects closely. Furthermore, UNHCR's implementing partners' monitoring teams undertake frequent missions to the project sites and report to UNHCR. In addition, UNHCR's technical teams conduct regular visits to the project sites in order to monitor the implementation of other technical project activities. As a platform for sharing lessons, learning from persons of concern, identifying common approaches, and addressing good and poor practices, evaluation is the barometer for the health of an organization.

At headquarters level, UNHCR's Policy Development and Evaluation Service ensures the systematic examination and assessment of UNHCR policies, programs, projects and practices. The Service promotes rigorous research on issues related to the work of UNHCR, and encourages an

active exchange of ideas and information between humanitarian practitioners, policy makers and the research community.



**ESTIMATED COST OF PROJECT (as at 11/11)**  
**Construction of Primary School facilities for Eritrean Refugees in Mai-Aini Camp, Ethiopia**

<i>Description</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Value/Unit</i>	<i>Total Value</i>
Primary school blocks (29mx 7.4m); 4 rooms per block	Block x 3	50,036.70	150,110.07
Sex – segregated latrines with 8 toilets each	Block x 2	6230.36	12,460.71
Feeding centre with internal kitchen (6mx 14m)	Block x 1	19,585.87	19,585.87
One multipurpose block (14 x 6m)	Block x1	20,284.88	20,274.88
Connection to water supply system	N/A	4,873.46	4,873.46
School furniture (Combined desks)	Unit x 180	39.85	7,172.15
Leveling of play grounds of the school for children	Lump sum	13,124.47	13,124.47
<b>Total</b>			<b>227,611.63</b>
<b>Implementation and administrative costs</b>			<b>15,932.81</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$A243,544.44</b>